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Current global and national trends and challenges and their impact on gender equality and empowerment of women

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2009/210, the present analytical report of the Secretary-General is submitted for consideration in the 2010 thematic discussion of the Council.

The main findings of the report are:

(a) Women tend to suffer disproportionately in times of crisis or hardship, as evidenced during the recent financial and economic crisis and food crisis, and from the impacts of climate change. Women frequently have fewer and less effective economic and social safety nets. Periods of transition and crisis, however, provide an opportunity to redefine economic and social policies and related institutions and to advance gender equality and empowerment of women;

(b) The creation of full employment and decent work should become the primary goal of macroeconomic policy. The current financial and economic crisis has once more brought to light the crucial role of Governments in stabilizing economies and averting or mitigating recessions. Fiscal policy should allow for countercyclical expansion and be designed to ensure that important areas of public spending (such as nutrition, health, education, childcare and housing, including sanitation and utilities) are prioritized. This is more important for women's opportunities and choices than simply increasing expenditure on programmes targeted at women, as is common in gender budgeting exercises. In this regard, gender audits of economic and social policies are useful and the collection of sex-disaggregated data is necessary;

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(c) Monetary and fiscal policy must be inclusive and gender-sensitive and ensure economic stability. Monetary policy should focus not only on inflation but equally on employment targeting. There is a need to ensure equal access and greater provision of credit to women and small-scale producers in all sectors, including agriculture, through measures for directed credit;

(d) Policies should focus on improving the quantity and quality of work available for women. Key elements involve the guarantee of (i) fundamental rights at work; (ii) decent labour conditions, including adequate and equal pay for equal work; and (iii) social protection, including for informal sector and self-employed workers. Enhanced public spending on employment-intensive social services will contribute directly to greater employment generation and, indirectly, through the multiplier effects of such spending. In addition, such public provision contributes to reducing the unpaid work burden of women;

(e) Particularly relevant to the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women is making agriculture viable and sustainable, as women represent a majority of the world's agricultural workforce and are the first to suffer from food insecurity. The following policy interventions are important and should be made gender-sensitive: (i) equal access to land, resources and tenure; (ii) public investment in relevant agricultural research and extension; (iii) distribution systems ensuring access to affordable food for all; (iv) expansion and improvement of rural infrastructure; (v) management of input and output prices to reduce volatility; (vi) financial inclusion and provision of credit and insurance to all farmers at viable rates; (vii) special interventions to encourage and facilitate adaptation to climate change;

(f) Investment in physical and social infrastructure is critical for advancing gender equality and empowerment of women. For example, investment in infrastructure for water and energy resources is particularly important because of the impact on health and the various requirements of unpaid work typically done by women;

(g) It is necessary to ensure the full and equal participation of women in political and economic decision-making at all levels, including in decisions about resource allocation. This is particularly important in post-conflict situations or in the context of displacement, when the needs, rights and priorities of women may otherwise be compromised. Policies should be formulated through continuous dialogue with those likely to be affected and with gender-sensitive indicators supported by up-to-date sex-disaggregated data;

(h) The health of women is adversely affected by multiple crises, and reduced household incomes exacerbate the causes of ill health and subsequent treatment. Current levels of financial allocation to health by Governments are generally insufficient to achieve a robust response to women's health needs. Financial barriers to universal access to quality health care must be lowered;

(i) The international community should support developing countries in implementing counter-cyclical measures in response to the crisis and overcoming gendered constraints and inequalities. International aid must be gender-sensitive, especially at the level of local development and local communities. Key elements in ensuring gender-sensitive aid allocation and delivery include: (i) ensuring participatory approaches to all phases of aid allocation and delivery; (ii) supporting

agencies that build local capacities and institutions; (iii) buying locally and supporting local and regional economic development; (iv) emphasizing the viability of local production, especially agriculture; (v) consulting with and building on the capacities of women; and (vi) rebuilding Government institutions and strengthening public activity rather than requesting cuts;

(j) The Millennium Development Goals have played an important role in mobilizing the commitment of the international community to address global development challenges. However, the framework for the Millennium Development Goals is insufficient for the full realization of women's rights, as its targets and indicators do not capture key issues such as violence against women and the right to land, property and housing, which are essential to the empowerment of women.

Contents

		Page
I.	Introduction	4
II.	Current trends and challenges	4
III.	Impact of the current global and national trends and challenges on gender equality and empowerment of women	7
	A. Effects on women's poverty and hunger	7
	B. Food security and women food producers and farmers	8
	C. Women's economic empowerment and access to finance	9
	D. Effects on women's employment and incomes	10
	E. Gender disparities and climate change	12
	F. Impacts on women's education	12
	G. The health of women and girls	13
	H. Violence against women	13
	I. Women in conflict, post-conflict and post-crisis situations	14
	J. Global partnership for development: mixed progress for women	15
IV.	Policy recommendations	17
V.	Recommendations of the Committee for Development Policy	20

I. Introduction

1. The present report offers a targeted analysis of current trends and challenges, such as imbalances and systemic weaknesses in the global economy, food insecurity, climate change, humanitarian crises, armed conflicts and international development cooperation, and their impact on gender equality and the empowerment of women. While several of these issues have been of long-standing concern, the current trends and challenges have added urgency, as they could undermine the progress made so far unless mitigating steps are taken. The final section provides action-oriented recommendations to address these challenges.

2. The report should be read in conjunction with the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and its contribution to shaping a gender perspective towards the full realization of the Millennium Development Goals" (E/2010/4-E/CN.6/2010/2) and with the report of the Committee for Development Policy's Sub-group on Gender and Development, "Global crises: why gender matters" (see E/2010/33).

II. Current trends and challenges

3. In this section, the major trends and challenges that have affected economic and social conditions worldwide, especially in developing countries, are briefly discussed.

Imbalances and systemic weaknesses in the global economy

4. The world economic situation has been improving since the second quarter of 2009. Global equity markets have rebounded and risk premiums on lending have fallen. International trade and global industrial production have also been recovering noticeably, with an increasing number of countries registering positive quarterly growth of their gross domestic product (GDP). The economic revival has been driven in no small part by the effects of the massive policy stimuli injected worldwide since late 2008.

5. But this should not lead to unqualified optimism. There are multiple reasons why this process may not continue in a stable and sustained fashion. On a structural level, the basic imbalances that caused the most recent crises have not been resolved. These include the imbalance between savings and investment in major economies, current account imbalances across major economies and the ecological imbalance that could lead to a constraint on future growth by eroding the Earth's carrying capacity. There is also a significant gap between full employment, inclusive social development and social protection. The current economic crisis has further highlighted that market economies, unregulated financial sectors and the rapid liberalization of trade all present deficiencies with regard to creating jobs and distributing wealth equally.

6. These structural problems are a reflection of the pattern of growth in both developed and developing countries during the previous boom, which had several limitations, paradoxes and inherent fragilities. It is not only that the boom proved to be unsustainable, as it was based on speculative practices that were enabled and encouraged by financial deregulation. It is also that this boom drew recklessly on

natural resources in a manner that has created a host of ecological and environmental problems, especially in the developing world. Further, because it was extremely unequal in terms of the distribution of benefits, most people in the developing world — even those within the most dynamic economic segment — did not fully gain from that boom. This is particularly true for women, who tend to be disadvantaged within societies because of, for example, lack of access to credit and productive resources, as well as restrictive social norms.

Food insecurity

7. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 1.02 billion people were estimated to be undernourished in 2009.[1] This is the highest figure since 1970 and represents an aggravation of trends that existed even before the onset of the economic crisis. This is largely a result of reduced access to food because of high domestic food prices, lower incomes and increased unemployment. Financial speculation was the major factor behind the sharp price rise of many primary commodities, including agricultural items, over recent years. Increased production of biofuels, shifting crop patterns and some crop failures have also contributed. Global prices of most agricultural commodities have since fallen significantly and eased the concerns about the adequacy of global food supplies. Nevertheless, world grain prices in September 2009 were about 23 per cent higher than 2006 averages.[2] Most importantly, the fall in international prices has not always been reflected in domestic prices, which have remained high in many countries.

Climate change

8. The most severe impacts of climate change are being experienced by vulnerable populations that have contributed the least to the problem. Climate change is expected to result in more extreme weather events, including windstorms, droughts, rising sea levels and increasing average temperatures.[3] The negotiations on the follow-up to the first phase of the Kyoto Protocol could not be concluded at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December 2009. Thus, reaching an agreement at the next Conference of the Parties in Mexico in December 2010 remains a major challenge. Nevertheless, the Copenhagen Accord contains important key elements. As at mid-March 2010, 110 countries contributing more than 80 per cent of global emissions had expressed support for the Accord.

Humanitarian crises

9. The risk of disasters is increasing globally because of the increasing vulnerability of rural livelihoods to weather changes, deteriorating ecosystems, urbanization and the expansion of slums. The risk is highly concentrated in middle- and low-income countries. The horrific recent earthquakes in Haiti and Chile underscore the need to ensure that the built environment is resilient in the face of an

[1] See Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2009: Economic Crises — Impacts and Lessons Learned* (Rome, 2009).

[2] See High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis, "Progress report: April 2008–October 2009", November 2009.

[3] Contribution of Working Group I to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2007.

array of potential hazards, both seismic and climatic, and that emergency and disaster relief responses are adequately coordinated.

Armed conflicts

10. Armed conflicts are another major threat to global peace, security, poverty alleviation and development. The nature of contemporary conflicts often makes the transition to peace more difficult. They are often internal, with regional and subregional repercussions, and are characterized by the erosion of central authority and the rule of law, massive internal displacement and refugee flows, the destruction of basic infrastructure and services, the emergence of war economies, and the frequency with which civilians become the direct targets and represent the overwhelming majority of victims. During armed conflicts, women and children additionally face greater risk of gender-based violence, which is more and more often used as a systematic tool of war.

11. The challenge is to focus on the root causes of these conflicts and to advance people-centred solutions. It is also important to strengthen institutions that prevent and mitigate conflicts, as well as to identify and resolve existing tensions before they turn into armed conflicts. There is growing recognition that a viable and functional economy provides a necessary base for sustainable peace, which in turn reinforces development.

International development cooperation

12. While official development assistance (ODA) increased by 10.2 per cent in 2008, the current economic outlook suggests that additional funds of at least $35 billion are needed if donors are to meet their 2010 commitments (see A/64/665). Even if those commitments are met, the actual monetary amounts will be smaller, since commitments are made in terms of percentage of GDP, which has declined in donor countries.

13. There are increased flows from innovative funding initiatives launched in the past three years in response to slow progress on key development indicators and the inadequate investment for gender equality. Alongside vertical funds, private grants are becoming more significant, including from major private foundations, whose ODA-type spending was roughly $5 billion in 2006, and from non-governmental organizations, whose spending from their own resources was some $10 billion in 2006.

14. The global crises are far from over, and without serious policy efforts to specifically address these pressing issues, along with the more structural measures needed to create broad-based development patterns and a more sustainable relationship between economic growth and the environment, recovery will be slow. This means that the international community must not only be aware of these risks, but also work actively to overcome them through integrated and systematic policy interventions.

III. Impact of the current global and national trends and challenges on gender equality and empowerment of women

15. This section analyses the impact of the current trends and challenges for gender equality, and puts forward ideas and proposals on how they might be turned into an opportunity to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women. The present report draws on the background paper prepared by Jayati Ghosh for the Department of Economic and Social Affairs on "Current global and national trends and challenges and their impact on gender equality and empowerment of women" (2010) and the section on "Food security and women food producers and farmers" draws on the background paper prepared by Bina Agarwal, "Food crises and gender inequality", submitted to the Committee for Development Policy expert group meeting on "Global crises: why gender matters", held in New York, 4-6 November 2009 (see www.un.org/esa/policy/devplan/cdpdocs/egm_gender.pdf).

A. Effects on women's poverty and hunger

Women and girls face greater insecurity

16. The effects of crises tend to be unevenly distributed among the population, with certain vulnerable groups, including women and girls, more adversely affected than other segments of the population. Since gender-based discrimination is intertwined with other forms of social and economic disparities and inequalities determined by location, community affiliation, social stratification and age, many of those who have been greatly affected in the recent crises are also those who were already among the most disadvantaged in the majority of countries and who experienced the fewest gains from the previous economic boom.

17. A large drop in per capita income growth in 2009 is likely to have significantly slowed progress towards poverty reduction. Between 47 million and 84 million more people are estimated to remain poor or to fall into extreme poverty as a result of the financial and economic crisis.[4]

18. This is particularly troubling as it comes on top of the worldwide food crisis, which has hit hardest in regions that already had poor nutrition indicators and where the gender gaps in nutrition were already quite marked. Before the onset of the food price hike, women and girls were already estimated to have constituted 60 per cent of the world's hungry[5] and are now thought to be facing more severe food shortages. During famines or food crises women and girls typically go hungry first. All these factors generate forces that deepen poverty and gender inequality and lead to setbacks in advances made towards the Millennium Development Goals.

Women, however, also hold the key to reducing poverty and hunger

19. Women often carry the responsibility for meeting their families' needs for food, water and fuel and make decisions that affect economic activity, including investment. Without making significant progress worldwide in advancing women's

[4] See *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2010*, United Nations publications, Sales No. E.10.II.C.2.

[5] Available from the World Food Programme web page: www.wfp.org/focus-on-women.

economic and social empowerment and strengthening women's rights, progress in reducing poverty and food insecurity will be elusive.

B. Food security and women food producers and farmers

Women farmers cultivate more than half of global food production

20. The world has renewed its recognition that substantial progress towards achieving goal 1 of the Millennium Development Goals and other international development goals depends heavily on improving agricultural development, which has been relatively neglected by policymakers. Improving agricultural development, in turn, requires an understanding of the different roles and responsibilities of men and women in developing countries' agriculture, along with priority investment in women farmers and rural producers. New and expanded investment in agricultural development that fails to recognize the critical role of women risks further marginalizing rural women and undermining the effectiveness of such investment.

Women farmers are among the most disadvantaged of cultivators

21. Poor farmers and smallholders, the majority of them women, will bear the brunt of increased pressures from rising food prices, economic volatility and climate change. Even though women farmers cultivate more than half of global food production, amounting to as much as 80 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean, they are among the most disadvantaged cultivators because they tend to lack land titles and tenure, are not able to access formal banking and credit and typically do not benefit from Government programmes for the provision of agricultural inputs, technologies and marketing arrangements. They are therefore likely to be particularly adversely affected by price volatility. The depletion of natural resources and decreases in agricultural productivity may have serious effects on workloads, income, the burden on health and the time available to participate in decision-making processes and non-agricultural income-generating activities.

22. In situations where women farmers have been given access to resources such as land, credit, equipment and labour, energy sources and training in technology and marketing, they have proven to be more productive than men and have made a substantial contribution to poverty reduction and sustainable development. Women farmers, however, experience gender-based constraints, including time-poverty because of the combination of productive and reproductive roles, limited mobility and often high levels of ill health.

Improving women's access to finances is a strategic entry point in their empowerment

23. Given that women constitute the majority of agricultural producers, access to economic resources, in particular land, labour, energy sources, technologies and financial services are strategic entry points for promoting rural women's social and economic empowerment. Sustained efforts will be required to ensure that women enjoy the benefits generated by the heightened attention to agriculture and food security.

C. Women's economic empowerment and access to finance

24. The main transmission mechanisms of the financial and economic crisis that have had negative impacts on women's economic empowerment, especially in developing countries, have been the global decline in exports, which has directly affected production in the export sector and subsequently domestic markets through negative multiplier effects (especially in export-dependent economies); significant declines in capital flows to the developing world; the pro-cyclical nature of aid; the impact of the crisis on migrant workers and therefore on remittances; the consequent exchange rate devaluation, which has affected domestic production and prices; the impact of extreme volatility in global food prices; and the fiscal constraints in many developing countries that have already led to cutbacks in important public expenditures and social development gains, thereby affecting access to basic services, reversing social development gains and adversely affecting their quality of life.

Women need to be empowered to cope with the negative impacts of the global economic downturn

25. Such processes have already had adverse effects on women in a variety of ways, several of which are likely to be exacerbated in the near future, even as economies recover in terms of output growth. Some of the main effects are higher unemployment, declines in real wages and income from self-employment, changes in patterns of migration, negative impact of higher food prices on food consumption among women and girls, more limited access to health care and education, and greater exposure to domestic and other forms of violence because of increased social tensions. So far, the governmental responses to the financial and economic crisis have comprised rescue packages and countercyclical measures. However, the design of these packages typically shows little sensitivity to gender issues.

26. Owing to the decrease in income following the economic contraction, girls may be withdrawn from schools, thereby reinforcing gender gaps in education. As home-based care work is not included in the calculation of GDP, the impact of the crisis on unpaid work is often neglected in economic analysis. These coping strategies can undermine the long-term development for the society as a whole. In many contexts, women also take on additional responsibilities to provide non-market substitutes for market goods that their families are no longer able to afford.

It is crucial to include women in decision-making processes and to enhance their economic capacity

27. In order to increasingly empower women, the challenge is to ensure their full and equal participation in economic and political decision-making at all levels. Furthermore, it is crucial to enhance women's economic capacity. However, it is extremely difficult for a country to embark on any gender-sensitive macroeconomic strategy in unstable and uncertain economic conditions. Therefore, capital volatility needs to be reined in. Monetary policies should focus not only on inflation targeting but more crucially on employment targeting. In addition, the regulation of financial activity in commodity markets is essential in order to prevent changes in commodity prices from destabilizing global markets.

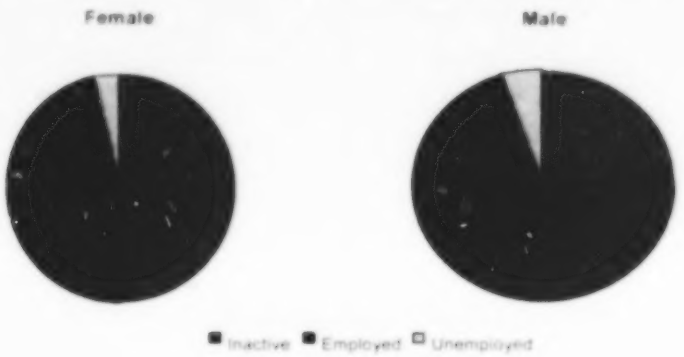
28. Tight credit markets tend to disproportionately restrict women's economic activity. Women comprise a significant proportion of self-employed workers with small businesses in the informal economy. The challenge is, therefore, to ensure greater provision of credit to women and small producers in all sectors, including agriculture, through measures for targeted credit. While microfinance has opened up new economic opportunities for women, it should not be seen as an alternative to institutional finance, to which men often have better access. Rather, the goal should be to develop ways (including direct public provision or underwriting of private activity and increased access of women to land and housing titles and other forms of capital) to provide access to credit for women and others who are currently excluded from the formal banking system.

D. Effects on women's employment and incomes

29. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that as many as 222 million people worldwide run the risk of becoming "working poor" (with an income of less than $1.25 per person per day).[6] This would disproportionately affect women, who, according to some estimates, represent 70 per cent of the world's poor.[7]

30. Globally, unemployment rates fell only marginally during the economic boom of the past decade and the rates of open unemployment for women, and especially young women, have been a growing cause of concern (see figure below).

Global distribution of female and male working-age populations by main economic status, 2009



Source: International Labour Office, *Women in Labour Markets: Measuring Progress and Identifying Challenges* (Geneva, 2010).

31. The most immediate direct impact of the crisis on employment is through exports. Women workers are usually the first to be laid off because they tend to hold more "flexible" jobs. Other sectors also suffered the impact of the negative

[6] See International Labour Organization, "Trends Econometric Models", July 2009; "Economic crisis and labour market impacts" (October 2009).

[7] See www.unifem.org/gender_issues/women_poverty_economics.

multiplier effects of declines in exports, such as construction and other industries catering to domestic markets. In addition, the impact of the crisis on the agricultural sector, where the majority of female workers in many developing countries work, is much more severe than has been recognized.

32. The gender impact of the economic crisis in terms of unemployment rates depends largely on, first, the degree to which a country is integrated with the global economy and, second, the structural inequalities in the labour market. In some countries, for example, the first impacts of the crisis took a stronger toll on the industrial sector, leading more men than women to losing their jobs. But, as the impact of the decline of industrial sector output spreads, unemployment of women workers is likely to increase. The type of fiscal stimulus undertaken also affects patterns of female-male unemployment composition. For example, when a package emphasizes the construction of infrastructure, the employment of men recovers faster since the construction industry tends to employ more men than women.

33. Both the low quality of work and the inadequate creation of jobs have become major sources of concern. Poor quality or vulnerable employment may simply lead to an increase in the number of working poor rather than to a reduction in poverty. Women, being more likely to work in small-scale activities and casual work contracts, are especially vulnerable to such a possibility. In most developing regions of the world (barring Latin America, where the ratio is around 30 per cent), more than half of female workers are either own-account workers or contributing family workers, typically in small-scale activities. In sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, the ratio is more than 80 per cent.

34. In developing countries, there is significant underspending in terms of basic social services, especially for health, sanitation and education. Since these are employment-intensive activities, they could contribute directly to greater employment generation. It is also important to ensure that such services are provided through employment that is well-paid and has good labour conditions. This will contribute to reducing the unpaid work burden of women.

35. The caregiving sector is an important employer of women, in both formal and informal employment. Further, although the issue of unpaid work tends to be ignored in discussions of employment, such work constitutes a significant part of women's lives, especially but not exclusively in the developing world. Women's care responsibilities hinder their access to the formal job market and to other roles in their communities. An important feature of changing patterns of work has been the globalization of care work, as reflected, for example, in the large-scale migration of women from some developing countries to wealthier countries to work as domestic workers.

36. The impact of the crisis, especially among migrants, threatens the gains made by them after moving to other countries. Evidence from past crises indicates that women migrants suffer adversely during economic hardship because they have fewer buffers to cope with the impact of the crisis.

E. Gender disparities and climate change

37. Climate change does not only endanger lives and undermine livelihoods, but also threatens to exacerbate the gaps between rich and poor and amplify inequities between women and men. In natural disasters brought about by climate change, those who suffer the most are the economically and socially more vulnerable individuals, among them many women and girls.

Women play an important role in mitigating climate change and natural disasters

38. Women's daily activities in agriculture, household resource management and forest management expose them to the effects of climate change, but their involvement in those areas also provides a variety of opportunities to make women important agents in resource management. Also, as primary forest managers and farmers with responsibility for managing food security, and as a group with special needs in dealing with natural disasters, including those resulting from climate change, women must be involved in the process of developing and implementing adaptation and mitigation strategies and also be able to access benefits from their management of carbon (see E/CN.18/2009/13/Add.1).

Women's participation in environmental decision-making, however, is limited

39. The underrepresentation or absence of women in high-level decision-making organs in the environmental sector has seriously limited women's contributions to environmental policy development, including adaptation and mitigation strategies on climate change. Women's limited access to technical skills, resources and information, especially in rural areas, has impeded their effective participation in and impact on decision-making with respect to sustainable development and the management of natural resources. Women must be active participants in the planning and decision-making around environmental adaptation and mitigation, technology transfer and financing. Moreover, there is a need to include social factors in the discussions about appropriate adaptation and mitigation schemes. In addition to the current emphasis on the technical aspects of climate change, political and socio-economic aspects of both mitigation and adaptation strategies have to be recognized.

F. Impacts on women's education

40. Education systems in many of the world's poorest countries are now experiencing the aftermath of the global economic downturn. The crisis could create a lost generation of children whose life chances will have been irreparably damaged by a failure to protect their right to education. Already, gender disparities remain deeply engrained, with 28 countries across the developing world having 9 or fewer girls in school for every 10 boys. There has been little progress towards the goal of halving adult illiteracy — a condition that affects 759 million people, two thirds of them women.[8]

[8] See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2010: Reaching the Marginalized* (Paris, 2010).

41. Efforts to provide quality education may also be endangered by the financial and economic crisis. Budget cuts may have a negative impact on the provision of teacher training, which is key to improving the quality of education. It is particularly important that teachers be sensitized to gender issues, as both girls and boys remain negatively influenced by traditional gender norms and stereotypes throughout the course of their studies, with a direct impact on educational attainment and occupational segregation.

G. The health of women and girls

42. The aftermath of the financial and economic crisis is likely to affect women's and girls' health in a number of ways. First, fiscal pressures are likely to lead to lower levels of health spending. Second, the incidence of illness may be higher because of increased exposure to risk factors, both physical and psychological. Third, the crisis changes the relative prices of commodities, which in turn will change household consumption patterns. And finally, changes in employment patterns and incomes that occurred as a result of the crisis are likely to have an effect on women's health outcomes and their demand for health care. Ultimately, all social determinants of women's health, such as nutrition, education and living and working conditions, can be undermined by the crisis.

43. With less disposable income, women are more likely to delay or forgo health care. In addition, loss of employment or reduction in income can cause households to reduce out-of-pocket spending on health, particularly for women members. Thus, the implications of this pattern on long-term health conditions must be factored into public policies for health in the current context.

44. The current crises, poverty and lack of infrastructure have adverse effects on maternal health. There are also basic factors, such as social exclusion, gender discrimination and political insecurity, that serve to entrench the underlying causes of maternal and newborn mortality and morbidity. Therefore, in the case of maternal mortality, both adequate health and nutrition before pregnancy and sufficient antenatal care are important. The circumstances of the delivery are also vital in ensuring the survival and health of both mother and child. The challenge is to keep the focus on the improvement of women's reproductive health.

45. Current financial resources are insufficient to achieve a robust response to women's health needs. The relative decline in public health services has added to health inequalities, as greater proportions of total health expenditure come from private out-of-pocket spending. This in turn adds to the pressure on poor households. In ensuring adequate access to health services for women, one of the most important issues is to lower the financial barriers to essential drugs and treatment.

H. Violence against women

46. Violence against women is a violation of human rights that occurs in all countries during peacetime and conflict, with devastating consequences on individuals, families and societies. Times of hardship expose women and girls to a greater risk of violence, and the multiple global crises contribute to this risk. There have been rising levels of despair and frustration in families and communities

around the world, which in turn are exacerbating violence against women. While a comparison among multiple countries is not possible, owing to the lack of available data, there is growing evidence that the widespread loss of jobs and livelihoods in certain countries will lead to an increase in the incidence of violence against women and girls. A four-country study of the impact of the Asian financial crisis in 1997 documented increases in crimes of all types, including domestic violence and sexual assault.

Times of crisis expose women and girls to higher risks of violence

47. Violence against women poses a significant risk to women's sexual and reproductive health and can result in mental ill health and other chronic problems. The challenge is to make health-care systems work with other sectors, such as law enforcement and labour, and contribute to more effective prevention, as well as effective gender-sensitive responses and service delivery to female victims of all forms of violence.

48. While ending violence against women is not a target of the Millennium Development Goals, it is now well recognized that such violence has high social and economic costs, undermines poverty reduction and development efforts and cuts across all of the goals. The United Nations Millennium Project Task Force on Gender Equality identified ending violence against women as one of the strategic priorities to improve the status of women.

49. In February 2008, the Secretary-General launched his campaign, "UNiTE to End Violence against Women", which continues until 2015 and coincides with the target date for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The campaign calls for five key outcomes to be achieved by 2015, in all countries: the adoption and enforcement of national laws, in accordance with international human rights standards; the adoption and implementation of multisectoral national plans of action; the establishment of data collection and analysis systems; the establishment of national and local campaigns; and systematic efforts to address sexual violence in conflict situations.

I. Women in conflict, post-conflict and post-crisis situations

50. There is increasing recognition of the importance of gender equality and empowerment of women for effective crisis response, as well as for sustainable economic growth and development.

51. Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009) call for the increased participation of women in peace processes, the elimination of sexual violence in armed conflict, the protection and promotion of women's human rights and the mainstreaming of gender equality perspectives in the context of armed conflict, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and reconstruction. In resolution 1889 (2009), the Council urged Member States, United Nations bodies, donors and civil society to ensure that women's empowerment is taken into account during post-conflict needs assessments and planning, and factored into subsequent funding disbursements and programme activities, including through developing transparent analysis and tracking of funds allocated for addressing women's needs in the post-conflict phase. There are good practices to build on, which show potential for mainstreaming gender equality. The question now is how to advance

the implementation of the mandates and commitments in post-conflict and crisis situations.

52. Conflicts, natural disasters and other crisis situations have profoundly different impacts on women, girls, boys and men, who also bring different perspectives and solutions to the issue at hand. In needs assessment and planning in the aftermath of a crisis, the participation and inclusion of women is critical for an effective response. Overlooking the needs and priorities of women and girls, including in terms of physical security, access to basic services and control of productive assets and income, can have devastating consequences. For example, in times of crisis all forms of gender-based violence, in particular sexual violence, may be exacerbated, and access to health care, education and livelihood severely affected. Yet, in many crisis situations, women continue to be excluded from decision-making processes and recent evidence points to inadequate recognition of and financing for their needs.

53. There is also growing evidence of the use of sexual and gender-based violence as a deliberate tactic of warfare. One trend that has been observed in some conflicts is increasingly organized and widespread sexual violence, including rape, sex trafficking, forced marriages and other human rights abuses. For women and girls, sexual violence often continues to occur well after "peace" has been established.

54. However, crises may provide important opportunities for positive transformations of gender roles and of women's political, economic and social empowerment. In post-crisis situations, it is important to build on and expand these opportunities and redress past gender inequalities and gender-based discrimination, including through legislative change, policy development, institutional and economic reforms and allocation of resources.

J. Global partnership for development: mixed progress for women

55. The status of women is, more than ever, affected by imbalances and systemic weaknesses in the global economy. The challenge is to make the global partnership for development responsive to the specific needs and priorities of women and girls.

56. The average annual bilateral ODA focused on gender equality for 2007-2008 was $15.2 billion.[9] In the period from 1999 to 2003, two thirds of the aid focused on support for gender equality and empowerment of women was in the social sectors, especially basic education and basic health. While aid for transport, communications and energy infrastructure accounted for a third of bilateral aid, little of it was reported as being focused on gender equality. About half of the aid to basic education and basic health targeted gender-specific concerns. A tenth of aid in those sectors was for the main purpose of promoting gender equality.[10] Improvements in basic education and basic health are critical to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

57. Protecting and enhancing women's economic opportunities and rights should be a key element of an equitable trade strategy but so far this has not received much

[9] See Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Development Assistance Committee, *Aid in support of gender equality and women's empowerment* (Paris, March 2010).

[10] See Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Creditor Reporting System, *Aid Activities in Support of Gender Equality 1999-2003*, vol. 2005, issue 6 (Paris, March 2005).

attention in trade negotiations. Progress towards developing an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system and providing tariff- and quota-free access for exports from the least developed countries has been disappointing. Meanwhile, developing countries continue to be pushed towards further trade liberalization and a number of new regional trade agreements are being ratified.

58. With regard to ODA, the allocations are not sufficient to accelerate progress towards achievement of the internationally agreed development goals. Large amounts of aid go to countries with relatively small numbers of poor citizens, without targeting poverty reduction. Aid allocations are also not in line with measures to address the multidimensional aspects of poverty or the needs of women.

59. The challenge is to incorporate the voices, needs and capacities of local women in the design, provision and implementation of aid programmes, as they tend to be the pillars of both the local community and their own households. Ignoring their needs, concerns and entitlements not only affects the gender distribution of aid, but also tends to diminish the overall impact and viability of the aid programme.

60. The allocation of greater domestic resources towards gender equality is critical and signals a country's commitment to achieving that goal. Such a commitment is also in line with the necessary "ownership" articulated in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. As was reaffirmed by the General Assembly in its resolution 60/210, gender equality is of fundamental importance for achieving sustained economic growth, poverty eradication and sustainable development. In other words, investing in women and girls has a multiplier effect.

61. Non-traditional sources of funding such as vertical funds, private foundations and non-governmental organizations also offer opportunities for financing gender equality. These funding options need to be examined further to understand their impact on the lives of women and their linkages to systems at the country level, that can ensure their sustainability, and the adequate tracking of results and impact.

62. With regard to financing for gender equality as an indicator for accountability to women, glaring gaps remain within multilateral institutions, particularly the international financial institutions. One example is tracking systems. Virtually every multilateral organization has a policy and/or strategy committing them to support gender equality in their programmes and policies. Yet, virtually none of them has set up a tracking system to regularly account for their revenues, allocations and expenditures on this, nor have the governing boards to which they are accountable required this.

63. An increasing number of countries are strengthening their ability to use gender budget analysis to track allocations and expenditures for gender equality priorities. At the global level, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's "gender marker" has been developed to track ODA contributions to gender equality as "principal" or "secondary" objectives. However, challenges still remain in several aspects: making clear distinctions between allocations towards "women-specific programmes" versus public allocations that benefit women directly or indirectly; the criteria of what is considered a women-specific programme; the lack of systematic and consistent data collection that would allow for comparisons over time; and the lack of methodologies that capture not only the supply side information, but also the demand side, in order to provide evidence on funding gaps.

IV. Policy recommendations[1]

64. **Policymakers should sustain and increase social expenditure, in particular for the most vulnerable.**

65. **Access to land and property is critical for reducing women's vulnerability to hunger and poverty, and empowering women.**

66. **Economic policies need to include both short-term gender-sensitive measures to mitigate the adverse effects of the crisis and long-term measures to address implicit gender biases in policies and gender inequalities in the economy. Fiscal stimulus packages that stress public investment in infrastructure need to be structured to ensure that they reach women.**

67. **The constraints faced by women in accessing formal financial services, including savings, credit, insurance and money-transfer services, should be identified and addressed. Particular attention needs to be given to the specific obstacles faced by poor women in accessing finance.**

68. **Ensuring land titling specifically for women and equal access to land and housing rights, security of tenure and productive assets should become a priority in national policies in order to improve agricultural productivity. This will require policy interventions on three major fronts: the family (through legislation on gifts or inheritance); the State (through regulation of land transfers); and the market (through facilitation of credit for the purchase or lease of property). The effective implementation of such measures will not only require changing social norms but also increasing legal literacy and providing legal counselling.**

69. **In terms of food security, it is imperative to meet the immediate needs of providing food while at the same time building longer-term resilience by addressing underlying causes of food insecurity and strengthening distribution systems that provide affordable food. With regard to agricultural productivity, long-term investments include the expansion of rural infrastructure and the improvement of market access, as well as the sustainable management of natural resources.**

70. **Agricultural extension services need to be tailored specifically to women farmers and they need to disseminate technical and/or managerial information to women. Increasing the number of female trainers would be useful in that regard.**

71. **There is a need for the following policy measures to counter the impact of the current global crisis and for action to be taken by Governments and social partners:**

(a) **Short-term measures include generating and saving jobs, finding income-replacement measures to assist women and men in caring for family members, skills training and retraining and providing support for small and medium-sized enterprises. These measures should be consistent with the long-**

[1] The recommendations contained in this section are consistent with the findings of the United Nations Committee for Development Policy in its report to the Economic and Social Council, *Official records of the Economic and Social Council 2010, Supplement No. 13* (E/2010/33), see chapter II.

term objectives of sustainable economic, social and environmental development, including gender equality;

(b) Medium- and long-term measures should be aimed at revising legislation, including labour laws where appropriate, providing better opportunities for women and men to reconcile work and family responsibilities. Policies should also cover training for women in non-traditional areas of work, including as entrepreneurs; retraining women and men for jobs that break through occupational segregation; the use of modern technology; and active labour market policies, including, for instance, affirmative action for women. In times of crisis, Government investment in public and community services should be strengthened where appropriate, including in rural areas and in slums. There is also a need for measures to ensure decent work in relation to working conditions and wages.

72. The specific needs and concerns of women migrants, especially those who migrate for work on their own, need to be addressed, and public policy for migration in both sending and receiving countries needs to move to a more gender-sensitive perspective.

73. The equal participation of women and men in climate change negotiations and decision-making, including mitigation and adaptation activities, must be facilitated, in line with ensuring that all climate change financing responds equitably to women's and men's needs and priorities.

74. Research on the gender perspectives of climate change needs to be further strengthened to effectively inform the responses to climate change, including in relation to mitigation and adaptation activities, technological innovations and resource allocation.

75. There is a need to ensure women's access to technology and new job opportunities such as "green" jobs.

76. Policies to counteract persistent inequalities in education include: improving accessibility and affordability by cutting fees and informal charges and offering targeted incentives; strengthening the learning environment by providing highly skilled teachers; and expanding entitlements and opportunities by integrating education strategies into wider anti-marginalization policies, such as social protection, reinforced legal entitlements and more fairly distributed public spending.

77. Spending for women's health and related sectors should be sustained so as to achieve the gender- and health-related Millennium Development Goals by 2015. Tapping innovative sources of funding should be further explored in order to raise additional funds for women's health.

78. Policy coordination will be required across several sectors, linking policies that stabilize prices of food, help people to gain access to and maintain health insurance, gain access to health services and to keep children in school.

79. There is also a need to make the administration of health systems more responsive to women.

80. Member States should demonstrate political leadership at the highest level in ending the pandemic of violence against women and girls and undertake all

available and concrete measures at their disposal, in accordance with the due diligence principle, in terms of both response to and prevention of all forms of violence against women.

81. Comprehensive legal and policy frameworks should be put in place, and strong multi-stakeholder monitoring, evaluation and accountability frameworks should be established with the participation of women's groups and civil society organizations.

82. Engaging men and boys in the prevention of violence against women should be made a priority.

83. Women's political, social and economic empowerment in post-conflict settings must be given increased priority and explicit attention. Women should be perceived not only as victims, but as active leaders in the process of societal reorganization and reconstruction. The windows of opportunity for positive change in governance structures, rule of law, infrastructure development and security sector reform during the post-conflict period must be used more effectively, to eliminate inequalities and discrimination in law and in practice and guarantee equal access to resources and opportunities as well as equal participation in the decision-making process and in policy development.

84. Additional stable and predictable foreign aid flows are required to ensure the effective implementation of gender equality goals and commitments. Developed countries should meet their aid commitments without further delay. In addition, more stable aid flows should be achieved through enhanced donor coordination and multi-year agreements on levels of support to low-income countries.

85. At the national level, efforts must be strengthened to avoid contraction of social spending, including on women's social protection, nutrition, social safety nets, employment, education and health.

86. While there is a need to establish a strong new gender entity at the United Nations that is equipped with adequate funding and political commitment to address the gaps in gender equality, all Governments, international organizations and United Nations system organizations need to implement the international commitments on gender equality and to strengthen the capacity for gender mainstreaming and advancing women's rights.

87. The lack of sufficient sex-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive indicators has constrained the development of effective gender-specific and gender-sensitive policy responses, resource allocation, monitoring and evaluation. The report *The World's Women 2005: Progress in Statistics*[12] reveals that vital gender statistics are not reported in 90 per cent of the developing world.

88. There is a need to systematically collect sex-disaggregated data and use gender-sensitive indicators in order to address the unmet needs of women and to support legislative reform, policymaking and monitoring.

[12] Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *The World's Women 2005: Progress in Statistics*, United Nations publications, Sales No. E.05.XVII.7.

89. It is also important to enhance the capacity of national statistical institutions to systematically produce sex-disaggregated and gender-sensitive data for all health-, education- and employment-related indicators and to disseminate gender statistics widely in order to advance development policymaking that is evidence-based and gender-sensitive.

90. There is also a need for greater engagement of national and international policymakers in the generation and use of sex-disaggregated data to inform policy decisions, monitor trends and assess impacts.

V. Recommendations of the Committee for Development Policy

91. Ongoing and emergent crises are affecting livelihoods worldwide and the adverse effects tend to be magnified where women are hurt, because of their multiple roles as income earners, mothers and care-givers. At its twelfth session, the Committee for Development Policy considered the gender dimensions of the current global economic crisis and the crisis of food security under the looming shadow of climate change (see E/2010/33). In its recommendations, the Committee sees ample scope for stepping up efforts to mitigate the impact of those crises on women and reduce persisting gender gaps, including by:

- Providing greater focus, in fiscal stimulus and other crises response measures, on employment generation for women, incentives to keep girls in school and methods to ensure adequate accessibility and availability of health and educational services
- Providing guarantees, as part of monetary and financial policies, to enhance access for women to affordable credit supplies in order to support livelihoods and income smoothing
- Providing greater protection to migrant women through improved security and social protection measures in host countries to reduce their vulnerability, when unemployed, to being recruited into prostitution and illicit activities
- Improving data collection and monitoring systems to facilitate real-time assessments of the extent to which human beings, distinguishing between men and women, are affected by the crises, in order to allow for better targeted policies for mitigation of the adverse effects of the present crises and for improving resilience to future ones
- Improving direct access to agricultural land and productive assets for women, individually and as groups, by easing transfers through gifts or inheritance at the family level, through government-supported asset transfers and by providing assistance in obtaining access to market mechanisms for purchase or lease
- Stimulating research and development to enhance the productivity of stable crops that are cultivated with a high participation of women.